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C O N F I D E N T I A L BOGOTA 001764

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/13/2018
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SUBJECT: COLOMBIA EXTRADITES 14 EX-PARA LEADERS TO THE U.S.

Classified By: Political Counselor John Creamer
Reasons 1.4 (b and d)

SUMMARY

1. (U) The GOC extradited 14 ex-paramilitary leaders, including Salvatore Mancuso, Diego Murillo, and Rodrigo Tovar Pupo, on May 13 to the United States to face narcotrafficking and money laundering charges. President Uribe said he extradited the fourteen due to their continued involvement in crime or their failure to meet their Justice & Peace Law (J&P) obligations. He added that victims could have access to the extradited paras through judicial cooperation agreements and that any seized assets would benefit victims. The Ambassador held a news conference to reiterate the USG's commitment to truth and reparations. Opposition Senator Petro called the extraditions "the death of the Justice and Peace process." End summary.

EX-PARA LEADERS EXTRADITED

2. (U) On May 13, the GOC extradited fourteen former United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC) leaders to the United States to face narcotrafficking and money laundering charges. The ex-paras had all begun testimony under the J&P Law. Some had provided limited information on mass graves, but none had provided comprehensive information on past crimes or turned over significant assets in accordance with their J&P law obligations.

3. (U) President Uribe said he extradited the fourteen because of their continuing involvement in crime or their failure to meet their J&P obligations. He said he had reached agreement with the USG that Colombians would have access to the trials of the ex-paras, and that any assets seized from the paras would benefit victims. Uribe added that the extraditions were necessary to show the GOC's determination to enforce the J&P Law, and called on guerrillas who demobilized under previous peace processes to confess their crimes and make moral reparations. Post worked closely with the GOC in the days leading up to the extraditions to ensure that all procedures and paperwork in the cases were completed in line with normal extradition protocols. Those extradited were:
--Salvatore Mancuso-Gmez
--Diego Fernando Murillo-Bejarano, aka "Don Berna"
--Rodrigo Tovar-Pupo, aka "Jorge 40"
--Eduardo Enrique Vengoechea-Mola
--Juan Carlos Sierra-Ramirez
--Francisco Javier Zuluaga-Lindo, aka "Gordo Lindo"

--Ramiro Vanoy-Murillo, aka "Cuco Vanoy"
--Guillermo Prez-Alzate
--Nodier Giraldo-Giraldo
--Hernan Giraldo-Serna
--Diego Alberto Ruiz-Arroyave
--Edwin Mauricio Gomez-Luna
--Martin Penaranda-Osorio
--Manuel Enrique Torregrosa-Castro

GOC WORRIED ABOUT FREEZE OF PARA EXTRADITIONS

14. (C) Presidential legal Advisor Edmundo del Castillo told us President Uribe decided to extradite the fourteen because he feared additional tutelas (injunctions) or court rulings would limit his extradition authority. Such restrictions would undercut presidential power and undermine the J&P process. Judicial Council Magistrate Angelino Lizcano told us the Council's May 5 ruling reversing a lower court injunction prohibiting Macaco's extradition was written as broadly as possible to allow the GOC to extradite other paras. Still, Constitutional Court Magistrate Maurico Gonzalez told us on May 9 that a victims' group was appealing the Council's ruling to the Constitutional Court. Given the current political support for victims' rights, he predicted that the Constitutional Court would rule in the victims' favor.

PUBLIC REACTION: MIXED

15. (U) The extraditions generated immediate, mixed public reaction. Opposition Polo Party Senator Gustavo Petro called the move "the death of the Justice and Peace process." He said the extraditions signaled the GOC's lack of confidence in the judicial system's ability to manage the ex-para leaders. Popular radio commentator Vicky Davila said many suspected the extraditions represented an effort to prevent para leaders from implicating more politicians, military, and businessmen. Castillo said it would be important that the USG show its commitment to address victims' rights after the extradition to preserve popular support in Colombia for the extradition process.

16. (U) The Ambassador held a press conference May 13 to reiterate U.S. support for the extraditions and to thank those involved in the successful operation. He also assured the public that the USG wanted to see the paras confess the full truth about their crimes and provide reparations to victims. He said there were legal instruments available to facilitate Colombian access to U.S. evidence/testimony provided by the ex-paras.

17. (U) Former Vice Minister of Justice and radio commentator Rafael Nieto said the extraditions would benefit both Colombia and the United States. He said the ex-paras had not cooperated previously in the J&P process, and had continued criminal activities from jail. Those activities needed to be stopped. He added, "The United States has every reason to cooperate fully with Colombia to find the truth and achieve reparations for para victims, and there are many mechanisms available to do so."

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